

THE LAST MESSAGE OF VALLABHĀCĀRYA

BY

G. H. BHATT

It is stated in one¹ of the works of Vallabhācārya that he was twice asked by the Lord Kṛṣṇa to leave the world—once on the confluence of the Ganges and the sea, and once in Mathurā in the United Provinces—, but could not carry out that divine command, as his mission was not fulfilled. After travelling, more than once, in the whole of India, Vallabhācārya spent his days in Adel, a small village two miles away from Allahabad. When the Ācārya completed his important literary works, and commanded a good following, he received the third call from the Lord to take Saṁnyāsa. In response to the divine call the Ācārya made all preparations for becoming a Saṁnyāsī, took the Tridaṇḍa Saṁnyāsa, burnt all his property and lived on the bank of the Ganges, meditating upon the Lord, and desiring to meet Him as early as possible. Later on, the Ācārya went to Benares, and spent about a week on the famous Hanumān Ghāṭa, maintaining complete silence and abstaining from taking food. This was the last week of the order of Saṁnyāsa which continued, in all, for about two months. The Ācārya has very well expressed his views on Saṁnyāsa in one² of his short treatises.

The two sons of Vallabhācārya, Gopīnāthajī and Viṭṭhalanāthajī, who were seventeen and fifteen years old respectively, and the leading followers like Dāmodaradāsajī, waited upon the Ācārya even during the period of Saṁnyāsa, and followed him even to Benarés. When they saw, on the second day of the bright half of the month of Āṣāḍha of the V. S. 1587 (=1531 A. D.), that the Ācārya was on the point of leaving this world, they re-

1 अन्तःकरणप्रबोध. The relevant verses are as follows—

आज्ञा पूर्वं तु या जाता गङ्गासागरसङ्गमे ॥ ५ ॥

यापि पञ्चान्मधुवने न कृतं तद् द्रव्यं मया ।

देहदेशपरित्यागस्तृतीयो लोकगोचरः ॥ ६ ॥

2 संन्यासनिर्णय.

requested him to enlighten them as regards their duty in future. As the Ācārya was following the vow of silence, he wrote, in Sanskrit, three and a half verses¹ which embody the noblest teaching of the Ācārya. These verses are popularly known as Śikṣāsārdhatrayaśloki, and are commented upon by one of the later descendants of Vallabhācārya, Dvārikeśaji by name, who flourished in the early part of the nineteenth century A. D. The verses in question have been, from the earliest times, a source of inspiration to many descendants and followers of Vallabhācārya, and have exercised such a wonderful influence in the history of the Vallabhācāryan School that writers like Harirāyaji (17th century A. D.) could not resist the temptation of writing short treatises² on the same subject.

The last instructions, thus given by the Ācārya to his sons and followers, refer to four points which are most important from the view point of the Śuddhādvaita School. The first point that is properly emphasised is 'not to turn away from the Lord Kṛṣṇa under any circumstances.' There are, generally, four causes of the spirit of indifference to the Lord, viz. (1) worshipping deities other than the Lord Kṛṣṇa, (2) enjoying things without dedicating them to the Lord, (3) speaking evil things, and (4) the absence of good company. One who, under the influence of these four things, neglects the worship of the Lord, invites total ruin, and should therefore, try one's best to be free from this evil influence. The second point, mentioned by the Ācārya, is that one should not look upon the Lord Kṛṣṇa as an ordinary master in the world who invariably dismisses his servants when they are found to be guilty. The Lord is always kind to all those who, once for all, surrender themselves to Him,

यदा बहिर्मुक्ता यूयं भविष्यथ कथंचन ।
तदा कालप्रवाहस्था देहचित्तादयोऽप्युत ॥ १ ॥
सर्वथा भक्षयिष्यन्ति युष्मानिति मतिर्मम ।
न लौकिकः प्रभुः कृष्णो मनुते नैव लौकिकम् ॥ २ ॥
भावस्तत्राप्यस्मदीयः सर्वस्वश्चैहिकश्च सः ।
परलोकश्च तेनायं सर्वभावेन सर्वथा ॥ ३ ॥
सेव्यः स एव गोपीशो विधास्यत्यखिलं हि नः ॥ ३३ ॥

बहिर्मुखत्वनिरूपण and बहिर्मुखत्वनिवृत्ति

The Last Message of Vallabhācārya

and does not reject these devotees even when they happen to show some weaknesses later on. The next point to which the Ācārya draws the attention of his followers is that the Lord never accepts the service of a person who is not completely devoted to Him, and whose interest more or less lies in the material world. The Lord should be, of course, worshipped in the manner, shown by the Ācārya himself. The last point that is referred to in the message is that one should worship the Lord from all points of view and under all circumstances, and the Lord, when thus worshipped, will manage all our things, both here and elsewhere.

After delivering this message to the world, the Ācārya entered into the sacred waters of the Ganges, and according to the tradition,¹ came out in the form of divine light which went up in the sky. The Ācārya lived in this world for fifty-eight years two months and seven days only.

The tradition, again, says that immediately after the disappearance of the Ācārya from this world, the Lord Kṛṣṇa manifested Himself before the sons and the followers of the Ācārya who were still waiting there mourning over the loss of their spiritual guide, and consoled² them by saying that they should not be nervous, that they should have complete confidence in Him, who is dear to the Gopīs and to whom the Gopīs are dear, and, should thereby, fulfil their goal. The Lord, further, said that the real liberation of an individual soul consisted in the enjoyment of its natural state after rejecting the material form made up of the twenty-eight elements. The followers of the Ācārya could, no doubt, gather courage by the words of the Lord and lived upto the highest ideal to such an extent that their names are, even now, remembered with due reverence.

The two young sons of the Ācārya maintained the best traditions of their father. The whole responsibility of the school devolved on the second son, Viṭṭhalanāthajī, after the demise of his elder brother Gopināthajī, and it must be said to the credit of

¹ Recorded by Dvārikeśajī in his Sanskrit Commentary on the last verses of the Ācārya, and by Yadunāthajī in his Vallabhadigvijaya a.

² मयि चेदस्ति विश्वासः श्रीगोपीजनवल्लभे ।

तदा रुतार्था यूयं हि शोचनीयं न कर्हिचित् ॥ १ ॥

मुक्तिर्हिस्वान्यथारूपं स्वरूपेण व्यवस्थितिः ॥ १३ ॥

Vitthalanāthaji that he not only succeeded in discharging his duties as the son and successor of the Ācārya but developed the aesthetic side of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta, exercised greater influence in the different parts of India, enjoyed the patronage of many ruling princes and secured a greater following. The History of the Vallabhācāryan School clearly shows that the last wish of the founder was fulfilled by many followers of the School and whenever there was any undesirable case of departure, the result was most deplorable as predicted by the Ācārya. The last message of Vallabhācārya is sufficient by itself to give us a fair idea of the grand ideal set up by him, and to show, at the same time, how the charge of sensualism that is undeservedly levelled against the teaching of the Ācārya is quite groundless.